Chapter 3

# Use of ICTs for Women Psychological Empowerment in South Africa:
## Telecentres and Empowerment of Women

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## ABSTRACT

*The term 'empowerment' has been defined in many ways in different professional fields. Empowerment means to develop a person's full potential to achieve a range of human capabilities. For people to be productive, they may need to be empowered to gasp their sense of self-worth and be able to tackle their personal issues. The study investigates the contribution of ICT tools such as telecentres for the empowerment of women in disadvantaged areas of the Western Cape, South Africa. The essence of empowerment entails the alteration of individual lives to attain goals they may have not been able to achieve. Thus, empowerment is an active, multi-dimensional progression that allows people to comprehend their potential and powers in all spheres of life. The study used the Dimensions of Empowerment Theory to explain the outcome of women's use of the telecentre using the dimensions of empowerment output indicator.*

## INTRODUCTION

Psychological empowerment allows people to gain strong self-esteem, the improved ability to analyse their situation, solve problems and influence strategic life choices (Gigler, 2014). Psychological empowerment is a pro-active concept that encourages an active and initiative-taking approach to life at the individual level. Psychological empowerment is further elaborated as something that is done for or provided to someone; it can also be an individual, psychological process, but one which may be influenced by external processes (Alao, 2019). The external processes include the environment and contemplation that a person is not formed only by heredity and conditions of growth and care, but also by opportunities and experiences in the world around them (Sharaunga Mudhara & Bogale, 2019).

The chapter explains the concept of psychological empowerment using Gigler's (2014) Dimensions of Empowerment Theory. The aim of the study is focused on using Information and Communication Technology (ICT), such as telecentres, to contribute to the empowerment of women in disadvantaged areas of South Africa. According to Statistics SA GHS (2017), 20.1% of the Western Cape households have access to ICTs (See Appendix 1), yet women are among the list of people who lack access to ICTs and have remained unrepresented in using ICTs. This study examines how ICT tools such as telecentres can empower women living in disadvantaged areas.

The establishment of telecentres in disadvantaged areas is to provide people with access to accurate and up-to-date information and equip them with new skills, to empower and improve their lives (Gomez, 2014). The chapter highlights the essence of telecentre use for the empowerment of women and the gap identified in the literature shows that enhancing women's informational capabilities is the most critical factor that determines the impact of ICTs on their well-being. The section that follows highlights the overview of psychological empowerment.

## Problem Statement

There are instances in the South Africa where men living in poor areas migrate to urban areas leaving behind their wives and children to seek for employment opportunities (Alao, 2019). Telecentres are ICT access point that provide free ICT services to community people to seek possible opportunities in the cities (Alao, 2019). However, despite the establishment of telecentres in some communities, women are hindered from using ICTs due to socioeconomic factors, cultural norms, structural(Human, political and technical) and conceptual factors (lack of computers, availability of space and other societal perceptions) (Idris, 2018). Telecentres are known to be suitable models that can be used to enhance computer literacy. As literacy is key to knowledge; without literacy, there can be no empowerment, particularly

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